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SUBJECT: MUTHANNA PC FORMED: STATE OF LAW LEFT SHOCKED AND
EMPTY-HANDED

(U) This is a PRT Muthanna reporting cable.

¶1. (SBU) Summary: At an April 30 Muthanna Provincial Council (PC) meeting, a last-minute surprise defection by Da'wa member Ibrahim Salman al-Mayali resulted in the State of Law coalition being completely shut out of provincial executive positions. Ibrahim Salman was voted in as Governor with the support of ISCI, which will hold the PC Chairmanship, and former Governor Ahmed Marzouk's Al Jumhoor party. The PC meeting had been scheduled to end a deadlock that developed after Marzouk had earlier convinced a member of the Independent Gathering of Iraqi Qualifications Party to defect from the State of Law-led coalition to his own, causing a 13-13 tie in the PC. End summary.

The April 30 PC Meeting

¶2. (SBU) Prior to the April 30 meeting, given the 13-13 deadlock on the PC, the factions led by State of Law/Da'wa and ISCI reportedly agreed on a deal whereby executive positions would be reserved for each grouping. According to the arrangement, the ballot for Governor would be reserved for up to three State of Law candidates and the PC Chairman ballot would be reserved for aspirants within the ISCI/Al-Jumhoor coalition. Furthermore, the Deputy Governor slots were to be reserved for ISCI/Al Jumhoor candidates and the Deputy PC Chairman post held for Da'wa and their Sadrists and National Reform Trend-affiliated coalition partners. State of Law had already settled internally on its preferred candidate for Governor. When the meeting started, however, Ibraheem Salman al-Mayali -- a Da'wa party member and also the mayor of Samawah -- proclaimed that he also wanted to be nominated for the governorship. When the ballots were counted he had 14 votes, 13 from ISCI/Al Jumhoor and affiliated small parties -- and one from himself. The State of Law members, stunned by the results, walked out of the proceedings.

¶3. (SBU) There still being a quorum of 14 members, council business continued. They voted Lateef Hasan Abbas al-Hassani (ISCI, brother of the ISCI-affiliated governor assassinated in 2007) as PC Chairman, and installed two Deputy Governors, both from the ISCI/Al Jumhoor camp. They did not vote for the Deputy Chairman at the April 30 meeting, but did vote an Al Jumhoor member into that slot at a council meeting held on May 3. When the dust finally settled the Da'wa coalition found itself completely shut out of the PC executive and under threat of expulsion if they continued to boycott council meetings.

The Deal

¶4. (SBU) Our sources tell us that the night before the vote took place, representatives from the ISCI/Al Jumhoor coalition approached Ibrahim Salman. They told him that they feared that either a Sadrists would be elected governor or that Abdulkarim Salih al-Shara (National Reform Trend), an

Iraqi/American dual national they believe has Sadrists ties would win the day. They also said they preferred a Samawah resident be governor, instead of someone from Rumaytha, which is considered a Sadrists stronghold. They offered him their bloc of 13 votes, which, with his vote, would guarantee him the governorship. Unbeknown to his coalition, he accepted, effectively dashing any hopes of Da'wa leadership at the top levels of the council.

Comment

¶5. (SBU) The losing Da'wa-led coalition remains rattled and has yet to come up with a response other than to boycott council meetings. We expect that the outcome of the vote will not harm the PRT's relationship with the council; we have good relationships with both the new Governor and the new PC Chairman. Unfortunately, the maneuver orchestrated by OneW PC Chairman. Unfortunately, the maneuver orchestrated by ISCI/Al Jumhoor also isolated the most well-known anti-corruption force on the council, Hakim Khazal Khashan of the Middle Euphrates Assembly. Hakim, who during the last provincial council term was frozen out of proceedings for six months due to his anti-corruption activities, had hopes of becoming the Deputy Chairman. As it stands, the ISCI/Al Jumhoor group may have unprecedented control over the council's awarding of contracts and the selection of Integrity Commission members -- which is a source of concern.

End comment.

HILL